How Well Do You Know Your Shit?

When you poop, the little brown blob in your toilet bowl is what’s left of the food after your body has absorbed all the nutrients it needs from it.

Pooping is vital to your health as it’s your body’s natural way of expelling the waste that it doesn’t need. That’s why how your poop looks and smells can also give clues to what’s going on inside your body.

Textures of poop:
- Sausage-shaped, smooth and soft: Optimal poop! You’re doing fine!
- Watery, no solid pieces, all liquid: You’re having diarrhea! This is probably caused by some sort of infection and diarrhea is your body’s way of clearing it out. Make sure you drink lots of liquids to replace the losses or otherwise you might find yourself dehydrated!
- Sausage-shaped but lumpy: Not as smooth as a sausage and lumps, but you need to load up on fluids and fibre.
- Soft blobs with clear-cut edges: Not too bad. Pretty normal if you’re pooping multiple times a day.
- Soft and sticks to the side of the toilet bowl: Presence of too much mucus, which could mean that your body isn’t absorbing the fats properly. Diseases like chronic pancreatitis prevent your body from properly absorbing fat.

Shades of poop:
- Brown: You’re fine. Poop is naturally brown due to the bile produced in your liver.
- Green: Food may be moving through your large intestine too quickly. Or you could have eaten lots of green leafy veggies, or green food colouring.
- Yellow: Greasy, foul-smelling yellow poop indicates excess fat, which could be due to a malabsorption disorder like celiac disease.
- Black: It could mean that you’re bleeding internally due to ulcer or cancer. Some vitamins and certain drugs could also cause black poop too. Pay attention if it’s sticky, and see a doc if you’re worried.
- Light-coloured, white, or clay-coloured: If it’s not what you’re normally seeing, it could mean a bile duct obstruction. Some meds could cause this too. See a doc.
- Blood-stained or red: Blood in your poop could be a symptom of cancer. Always see a doc right away if you find blood in your stool.

Quick facts about poop:
- The food you eat usually takes 3 days from the time you eat it till it ends up in your poop.
- Poop is made up of undigested food, bacteria, mucous, and some undigested cells, that’s why it smells.
- Healthy poop sinks slowly.

How often should you poop?
On average, people go once or twice a day, but some may go more and some may go less. According to doctors, there’s no normal frequency, so as long as you’re comfortable, you’re fine.

How to keep your poop healthy?
- Eat a diet high in fibre (20 – 25g), lots of water, regular exercise.
- If you’re having trouble pooping (constipation), dietary fibre can help make the passage smoother.
- Proper hydration helps ensure your colon is slippery enough for the poop to move through.

When to see a doctor?
The first time you see anything out of the ordinary in your poop, don’t panic yet. See if it happens again. If symptoms persist, then go talk to a doctor. Pay attention to what your body is telling you, and whenever you feel uneasy, it’s time to go to a doctor.